



Testimony, Feb. 21, 2013 – Garland Walton

Thank you for this opportunity. My name is Garland Walton, and I have worked for Domus, a Stamford-based nonprofit, since 1999. Domus partners with schools and districts to serve high-need youth in addition to running our own schools and other programs for children who've been traumatized and face many barriers to academic success. We've been running after-school programs in schools since 1999, and two years ago, we were asked by a Stamford middle school, TOR, to run their after-school program given our success with struggling students.

That partnership has been a success in many ways. The principal there has told us that the CMT scores for his students increased dramatically; he gives us credit, while we're a bit more cautious.

But there's no doubt among researchers that the things quality after-school programs do for kids are the very things that help these children be successful in school and in life: improved social and emotional outcomes, improved academic achievement, and a healthier lifestyle. It also increases the preventative factors that keep kids from engaging in risky behaviors.

All these things are expensive: academic failure means no diploma and a lifetime of public assistance, and unattended mental and physical health issues mean tremendous costs in the short- and long-term plus chronic stress and lost wages. Engaging in fewer risky behaviors means fewer unintended pregnancies, less substance use and abuse, and a dramatically lower juvenile crime rate—which of course leads to fewer adults in our prison system. The list goes on, and every single thing on that list costs lots of money.

Our program makes an enormous impact on less than \$10 per day per low-income child, yet without State funds, Stamford would likely discontinue the program as must make hard funding choices, like you. That same \$10 ensures that low-income families can earn money and aren't worried their children are alone or being "found" by trouble (as adolescents often are).

A national study coming out in March shows that income differences in math achievement were eliminated for students who had consistent after-school activities across grades K-5.

A UC Irvine study showed that close alignment with school-day instruction had a statistically significant **positive** effect on English Language Arts scores on California's standardized test while misalignment had a statistically significant **negative** effect on scores for English Language Arts and Math.

Our internal data shows after-school participants had a higher rate of school-day attendance, ensuring the increased seat time needed to close the achievement gap. Kids having fun and learning grow more attached to school, and that increased school engagement has long been tied to greater student achievement.

Domus created the Family Advocate Model in the 1990s, which is now used in our schools as well as Stamford schools. Our family advocate placed at TOR ensures that kids who need it the most—high-need students who've experienced trauma and are referred to the after-school program, allowing us more time during each day to develop a relationship and help address each individual child's needs to remove barriers to school success.

High-quality after-school programs are one of the cheapest ways to get what our communities need: an educated workforce full of happy, productive adults who are earning a livable wage and paying taxes.

Thank you for your time.

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Note: This is an excellent, concise two-page summary from Harvard Family Research Project (which helps increase the effectiveness of public and private organizations and communities as they promote child development, student achievement, and healthy habits) on proven benefits of these programs and critical factors for achieving successful outcomes: <http://bit.ly/W4nzJa>.